

Concerning California's Migratory Workers Problem.*

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BOARD OF PUBLIC HEALTH
SACRAMENTO

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To the Board Members:

A letter recently received from the United States Surgeon General makes reference to coöperation of local health departments and the State Department of Public Health with the Resettlement Administration. I am informed that at the present time there are between 150,000 and 200,000 migratory workers in the State of California. They have entered the State at the rate of about 50,000 a year. Many of these people are employed or seeking employment in the harvesting of the various crops in California. They have come from the south as well as from the drought areas and middle western states. They are poorly nourished, living for the most part on the vegetable products which they are harvesting. The Resettlement Administration is making a demonstration in the establishment of camps, the location of which is enumerated in the enclosed copy of letter from the Surgeon General. There are in these camps at the present time some 10,000 workers. One of these camps, at Marysville, has been in operation for about three years, and the population fluctuates from about thirty families in winter, to about two hundred in summer. These people are furnished shelter by the Government, but no subsistence, though many of them may be upon the relief rolls.

The chief of our Bureau of Tuberculosis, E. T. Thompson, first brought to our attention the prevalence of tuberculosis among these workers, and in order that a survey might be made to determine the extent of the incidence of tuberculosis, we requested from the Surgeon General funds to make a complete survey, taking the chest pictures of all suspects, which would involve the employment of personnel, a trailer and necessary equipment. This request has not as yet been granted by the Public Health Service, as it is contained in the budget for the second quarter of the fiscal year.

The Bureau of Child Hygiene of the California State Board of Public Health has been holding clinics among this group of people, making complete examinations of all the children. Of course, after these surveys have been made, the question naturally arises as to what we are going to do. As far as the tuberculous patients are concerned, the Bureau chief's idea seems to be the only one which would meet the emergency, namely, that the Government provide funds for a subsidy so that these people might be cared for in our private tuberculosis hospitals. I understand that Arizona is willing to coöperate in making such a request from the Federal Government.

Finally, there is the question of the effect these people camping on the outskirts of many of our communities is going to have upon the health of the people of California. Undoubtedly a large percentage of these people are going to qualify for county relief in case of illness, as soon as they have been in the State the required period of time, and they will then become our problem.

In talking with Mr. Mills, who heads the Resettlement Administration here in California, he states they would like to have us carry out the suggestion of the Public Health Service that we render assistance. We are, at the present time, subsidizing Imperial County with sufficient personnel so that they can take care of the camps of that county. The same would apply to Riverside County. Los Angeles County, according to Mr. Mills, has a negligible number of migratory workers. This leaves Northern California

and the San Joaquin Valley. By the employment of an epidemiologist or a medical man who had some experience in health work, and two nurses, one located in the San Joaquin Valley, which would include three hospitals, each one of them fifty miles from the other two, and one in Northern California, would probably take care of the infectious diseases.

Provision has been made in these camps for clinic facilities, and the idea would be that the doctor could conduct a clinic at least twice a month in the various camps, and that these cases would be allocated to the health officer or the local unofficial agencies for care.

Though there are only about 10,000 in this group under the Resettlement Administration, there are marginal camps surrounding these government camps which have probably a population which is in greater distress, and they would have to be included.

In addition, of course, our Department is always available in case of an emergency. Our greatest fear among this population is an outbreak of typhoid fever. We have had a decided increase in the incidence of typhoid during the past year among itinerants, and an epidemic of twenty cases in San Bernardino County.

This subject will be brought up for discussion at the next meeting of the Board.

Very truly yours,

W. M. DICKIE,
Executive Officer.

Concerning Retiring President Pallette's Address on "Human Betterment."

To the Editor:—My compliments to Dr. E. M. Pallette of Los Angeles, Retiring President of the California Medical Association, for his wonderful article on "Human Betterment" (May issue, CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE, page 296). This article should be read by everyone all over the country. Doctor Pallette has stated some very patent truths.

We modern humans are suffering from a load of human misfortunes that will fast become a serious problem. What with our earnest endeavor to relieve pain, save, and prolong life, we have reduced infant mortality to a minimum and extended the longevity of man to almost a maximum, having thoroughly upset nature's balance of elimination of the unfit. As a result of the reduction of infant mortality we are getting an increase of the feeble-minded, the criminal, the mentally and physically unfit, all of which will become a social and financial problem to the next generation.

Rosenberg Building, Santa Rosa, California.

Very truly yours,

W. C. SHIPLEY, M. D.

Concerning Untoward Effects of Sulphanilamide.

Los Angeles, July 13, 1937.

Editor, California and Western Medicine,
450 Sutter Street,
San Francisco, California.

Dear Doctor Kress:

Since the more extensive use of Sulphanilamide recently, I believe it of interest to report seeing a case of extensive dermatitis involving almost the entire body, more specially neck, hands, and arms.

This particular patient did not carry out his physician's instructions. He failed to report for observation as soon as he should have and he failed to reduce the dosage as his doctor had told him.

This case illustrates the fundamental principle in all medication in that it may be an idiosyncrasy to the drug, or that the patient's elimination of this drug is subnormal and an accumulation resulted, or the dosage was too great for the individual.

1930 Wilshire Boulevard.

Very truly yours,

CHARLES R. CASKEY, M. D.

* See also in this issue: Editorial comment on page 74; and press clippings on pages 142 and 143.